

THE DEATH OF ICARUS
AND OTHER POEMS

ARTHUR K. SABIN

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THE DEATH OF ICARUS

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THE DEATH OF ICARUS

AND OTHER POEMS

TOGETHER WITH
A NEW TRANSLATION IN TERZA RIMA
FROM THE PURGATORY OF DANTE

BY
ARTHUR K. SABIN

AUTHOR OF 'TYPHON' AND OTHER POEMS

GLASGOW
JAMES MACLEHOSE AND SONS

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THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Prelude.

ESCAPED the city turmoil in mid June,
To Devon with her emerald woods and fields,
Lanes bowered in dewy verdure, crystal floods
Lucent as many jewels, and sweet homes
Thronged with a kindly-hearted race, we fled,
My friend the bard and I ; and through a month
Of new-born summer joy we dreamed and sang,
Till tremulous life awakened in our souls
The sense of happy kinship with a world
Where grass seemed bloom and insects nightingales.
Oft as the lowing kine at eventide
Besought the brown-armed milkmaid, that their full
Warm udders might be emptied of rich spoil,
We tracked the fragrant pasture-land, and nigh
Some drowsing brooklet lay upon the herb,
And, to the nodding daisies and the throng
Of sleepy king-cups, read the well-worn tale,
Or mouthed our own fond verse in tender rhyme

PRELUDE

Or style heroic. Then my bard would rise
With orbs like evening planets, and along
The margin of the little brook would pace
Abruptly, or, while from a neighbouring grove
Rapt choristers thrilled the twilight, would stand mute
A breathless fifteen minutes, then sit down
And tell an ancient story in a tongue
Melodious as a bird, with meaning new
Impassioned, fresh as the sweet world around.
But I, within whose eager heart and brain
These memories were fashioned long ago,
Have but a feeble pen, and cannot strike
His music forth, nor weave a tale like him :
Yet as I can, undaunted will I sing,
Nor fear to soil the honour of my friend,
Though silver bells be mute, and iron clang
Responsive to my touch disturb the theme.

Sir Hildred : A Fantasy.

SIR HILDRED, he who bore the unclouded shield
Which mirrored forth all nature, in long quest
Seeking forlorn the Beast with Angel-wings,
Had entered a vast forest where no sight
Nor sound of human presence e'er was known.
In shadowless gloom ne'er lit by any ray
Of sun or star, a mournful twilight land,
He traversed many leagues from break of dawn,
Till darkness of the falling night hemmed in
All vision. On his ear that day had broke
No cry of beast or bird, but evermore
Loud winds had rung amid the crashing boughs
High overhead, tempestuous, and had filled
The lowly air with dissonance and dread.
Now tending well his generous steed, he took
Poor meal of nuts and candied fruit and wine,
Viands he ever bore to serve the stress
Of knight on so strange pilgrimage ; then lay,

SIR HILDRED: A FANTASY

And in refreshing slumber sped the hours,
Scarce marred by any ghost of mystic dream,
Till day rewoke the gloam.

Anon he rose,
And girded tight his arms, and to the east,
Where seemed at last a glimmer of faint dawn
To tinge the world-old forest, he advanced,
Urging his mute companion warily,
And reached beyond a limit, where the main,
Flaming in tremulous splendour of new day,
Rolled on the reedy margin of a field
With verdure deep and laughing flowers aglow.

As one, who, pent in dungeon where no beam
Of heaven inhabits, but the bodeful shade
Of Melancholy stalks amid the gloom,
Forth issuing at length beholds the sky
Rejoicing, till his swollen heart grows faint,
Much surfeited ; e'en thus Sir Hildred stood,
With senses dulled, forgetful, and he heard
Scarce hearing, saw, but saw as in a dream.
Soft fragrance smote upon him ; then anew
A solitary bullfinch piped his song ;
And then a lark ; and then the thrushes reeled
Their melody wild like Bacchanals o'ercome
With joy divine. Great Nature in one tune
Harmoniously was thrilling, as befell

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

(So speaks the hoary legend) when upon
The sea-swept Phrygian promontory nigh
To ancient Ilium, ages long ago,
Venus unto Anchises came :—He watched
His flocks on Ida in that barren time
When famished wolves descend upon the fold.
And Beauty breathed among the hills : beneath
Her tread old Earth, incarnadined, broke forth
In joyous flower, and gladness filled the sky,
And all the bright world uttered loud its song.
So through Life's shadow visions come to men.

Sir Hildred in dim faintness felt a prayer
Surge from his soul : “ O Jesu dear, whose feet
Have trod earth's darkling road, thy creature bows
Before thee : for he left the homes of men,
Much sorrowing that he found thee not, and sought
Thy symbol in a being of the wilds.
But this strange quest hath led him far, where cries
Of doubt, and desolation drear assailed
His wandering path ; where the stern human foe,
Who joys to slaughter, smote him, until he
Long stumbled forward—dauntless—though with soul
Cast wounded down, and thy sustaining hope
Of solemn dream nigh lost. Now he beholds
The splendour of thy universe in spring
Triumphant ; now he sees thy gentle hand,

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

Thy beauty, in the blossoming of the field ;
And faith is wakened in his heart to know
Thou wilt not deck thy meadows, but leave man
Unbeautified in spirit. With a heart
Exalting thee, he turns upon the quest."

Thus offering his tribute meek from heart
Engladdened by the day, Sir Hildred rose,
And stood with rapt look gazing where the sun
Flamed scintillant upon the murmurous deep.
The live air glowed about him ; and his brow
Grew shadowed with the wonder of a dream ;
But clear his eye that saw amid the foam,
No phantom, but in panoply of war
Clad heavily, his giant steed bespread
With sea-weed wild, a kingly knight advance.
Wet was the green weed drooping from his plume ;
On his unburnished shield the wet weed clung ;
The green wet weed entangled lance and sword.
As up the strand he mounted, o'er the flowers,
Sir Hildred cried : " What manner of man art thou,
From ocean-cave approaching ? " and his hair
Stiffened in weird expectance, and his hand
Trembled in dread. But he upon him rode,
Nought hearing, heedless, with ensanguined lance
Addressed to war : yet seeing Hildred's beard
As blossoming hawthorn white, quick reined his steed

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

And sprang to earth, and loosed his shield, and cried :
“ Strike as thou wilt, I harm not thee ” ; then fell
Before him.

Gently Hildred from the soil
Uplifted him, and gently spake : “ Sir Knight,
No warrior-love of blood is mine : I wear
The brand to smite Life’s enemy alone ;
But ever send my prayer to God that he
May show on earth the kingdom of his peace.
But tell, I pray, who art thou, whither bound ?
So wildly coming is loud argument
Of wild emprise.”

Then seeing the mute brow
Still void of answering thought, he courteously,
Though yet the wonder crawled along his blood
Not vanquished, spake again : “ Or should I first
Relate to thee—for confidence begets
Like confidence—then on this grassy knoll
Make we our seat, and I will tell the tale.”

And that strange knight obedient, as a child
Who, owning one desire, for its lone sake
Will tend his parent mutely, sat him down,
And bent unto the hoary knight his ear ;
Who, after meditation brief, spoke thus :

“ Far westward lies a country of renown,

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

By gentle folk inhabited whose hands
Shrink not from toil ; but ever at the loom
In strange content they labour, or with art
Nobly constructive giant fabrics rear,
A wealth of human vanity. In mines
Deep pent their dull sons hew unceasingly
Earth's bosomed fruit of metal and fair stone
To satisfy their lords. They plough the sea
Victorious ; and they sail upon the wind :
All rare devices of mechanic skill
Attend them. But the soul hath lost her calm
Proud equipose along their ways ; and Life
There disenchanted hath forgot her joy.

“ In quest forlorn thence wandering, I have come
O'er mountain and through forest vast, through lands
Remote, untravelled yet by humankind ;
And late have tracked yon forest where the gloom,
Disturbed by desolation's wind, proclaims
That in its deeps, one habitant supreme,
Dwells grim despair, with bodeful visage chill
And eyes ne'er lit with hope. And issuing now
Upon this joyous Mayland where all bloom
And natural sweetness gloryingly abound,
Where the sky rings in melody, and the main,
Unstirred by any breath of heaven, rolls on
Majestically calm ; I feel anew

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

The rapture of the universe control
And upward swell my spirit in wild song
Unutterable of gratitude to God.
I found him not in ways of men ; but lost
The vision of his countenance when strayed
In quest of him amid yon dolorous gloom.
Now here again his radiance revealed
Breaks on me, and my heart forgets its toil."

Thus garrulous his voice flowed on, and told
Much further the wild story of a dream,
That nightly broke his slumber with a voice
For ever wailing, bidding him pursue
Unweariedly its semblance through the world ;
Nor ended its imploring till he rose
And followed. As the pearl-lit moon her brow
Lifts from the billow glittering, so in form
And whiteness was this creature beautiful,
Though fanged as any fearsome beast that dwells
'Mid carnage, and with ever pitiful eyes
Complaining, fluttering quick its angel-plumes.

He to the shrine of many a saint repaired
And sought interpretation ; but nor priest
Nor learnèd clerk availed him, and the cry
Was ever shrill. At length he journeyed where
A little wise old man sate on a tomb,

SIR HILDRED: A FANTASY

Who heard his dream and slowly spake : " My son,
A blessed angel sought thee unawares ;
But thou denied him ; and the ways of men,
Rock-hewn, tore his soft heavenly feet, and filled
His being with great woe ; so forth he went
And habited with creatures of the wild,
And grew like them in form, but beautiful
Still with celestial radiance. Now he breaks
Nightly thy slumber wailing—for his voice
Hath lost sweet human utterance—and would lead
Thee to a spiritual city which he knows
Hung on an utmost margin of the world.
Go quickly thou : for of unnumbered toils
Thy warlike soul is weary, and may droop
Ere yet the quest be won. Long is the way,
And lone to tread ; nor shall thy strength renewed
Surge up through each encounter, nor thine arm
Strike ever true. But rather from the din
Of battle thou at length must turn, with frame
Worn to a shadow, sick and bruised, and chill
With dreary weight of years, forgetting hope,
And almost thy weird dream. But in the hour
When thou shalt sink not conquering, when the
voice
No longer stirs thy sleep, and fire glows dull
Amid life's embers,—suddenly a tone
As softly strung as angel melodies

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

Shall triumph through thy doubtful heart, and thou
Shalt catch a vision of the spiritual home,
Light beaming on its pinnacles, and hear
Its children welcoming the Prince of Peace
Victorious from his war. In that sweet time
Thou shalt possess the angel of thy soul.
Now follow ! Turn thy thought not from the path
Once entered, while the creature of thy dream
Wailing breaks not thy slumber : if thy foot
Err on the road, its tears shall waken thee."

Thus spake that ancient man in accents slow,
As a slow organ sobbing thrills the faint
Deep echoes of a dim cathedral pile ;
And Hildred thence had risen, and through the
world

Followed. Now many a slow revolving moon,
Shedding her silver light o'er sea and land,
Had filled her bowl and emptied, since his feet
Sped from the precinct of his mortal home,
In the far city he no more should see.

His tale Sir Hildred ended ; then arose
The stranger knight intent to speak ; but shrill
A fierce wind suddenly brake o'er the mead,
And lashed the rippling waves to foam, and tore
Boughs from the crashing trees, and hurled the birds

SIR HILDRED: A FANTASY

And sweet flowers unto death. Whereat his brow
Darkened with mighty passion, and his lips
Flung forth huge syllables of an unknown tongue
Louder than shrilled the tempest, ending clear :
“The wind impels me now : O follow me !”
And leapt upon his steed, and in the gloom
Of that old forest vanished.

Many a doubt
Revolving in his mind, Sir Hildred rode
Quick in pursuit ; and muttering : “No wind
Can sway a man : yet will I follow !” on
Through the grim shadow drave. But soon the way
Thickened, and checked his pace ; and knotted roots
Of age-old forest kings entailed his steed
Sure-footed ; and his keen ear lost the sound
Of the strange knight departing : yet a voice
Echoing weirdly down amid the din
Of boughs clashed by the tempest—“Follow me,
O follow !”—reached him still : and on he rode
Doubting.

So all the live-long day he rode
Through the dull forest, never pausing, till
At eventide he issued on the brow
Of a great steepy headland, and thence saw
Right down a glowing valley the fair homes
Of happy dwellers in the meadow-world,
Where orchard-bloom and streamlet and bright lawn

SIR HILDRED : A FANTASY

Beflowered, shone in the setting sun ; but saw
Beyond, a joyous city, with her towers
And palaces and pinnacles ablaze
In sunset, all swept by a purple sea.
Deep wonder fell upon him, and the calm
Of satisfied desire ; and down he rode
Mutely. Then ere the twilight shadow fell,
A passion seized his spirit, and he knew
The Creature of his dream, and heard a cry,
As of a million voices in wild song,
Ring from the joyous city : " Welcome thou—
Welcome ! Our Prince of Peace ! "

And on he rode
Not doubting, but with triumph in his soul.

Interlude.

THUS sang my poet as the darkness fell.
And whether from the witchery of the eve
Enchantment drooped, or cadence of his voice
Lulled me as it shook music on the tale,
I know not ; but I lay upon the bank,
Gazing in still consideration down
The slope of misty pasture to the west,
While Venus like a newer moon of gold
Sunk to her setting, and that brother beam,
Large calm majestic Jupiter, had trod
A span of sky behind her. Then I turned
My face unto the zenith, half aware
That silently my friend had stole away,
And watched the glittering multitude of stars
Through heaven advancing slow. They seemed a host
Innumerable as that Eastern throng,
Swart Cimbri, by the conqueror Marius seen,
Pouring untutored legions down the Alp

INTERLUDE

Torrential, into blossoming Italy.
Rome trembled to her capitol : but when
He the stern Consul, fearless, took the field,
Practised in stratagem, and in the toil
Of war delighting, knowing every art
Of wise defeat and victory,—he led forth
Invincible battalions, and with skill
Swiftly up-piled huge ramparts, from whose shade
His phalanx of grim iron-linkèd men
Were hurled on the barbarian horde, by night
Confounding, irresistible by day,
Till backward rolled the shattered tide of foes,
In vast turmoil and miserable death
Enveloped ; till, with heavy carnage strown,
Old Earth wept seas of blood, and Heaven her face
Darkened in bodeful cloud. Such victory
Needful to lift the human from the brute.

Thus pondering, my thought slipped into dream.
Stars rushed to mighty conflict through the sky
Above me : suns and planets led the van.
Huge bearded meteors reeled amid the fray,
Tumultuous, their wide-gaping jaws a-glow,
Devouring stars and galaxies, until,
Glutted with food combustible, they flew
Asunder, ploughing up the Milky Way
In desolation, scattering from heaven

INTERLUDE

Her orbs like rain, which, falling, smote the homes
Of terror-haunted mortals with fierce death.
My gaze dropped downward now, and saw a sea
Of living flame roll weirdly at my feet.
A voice surged from its billows as the moan
Of a wild anguished beast ; and then its hue
Dusked into purple. Next I heard a cry—
“Welcome, the Prince of Peace!” and from the deep,
Like huge behemoth, rose a creature dire
Laden with ghastly armament of war,
A multitude of cannon like grim eyes
Upon his broad flanks glaring, and his mouth
Discharging pestilential fire and breath
Of sulphur. And the people shouted—“ Hail,
O Prince of Peace ! ” and he, in thunderous voice
Responding “ I am the Prince of Peace ! ” strode on,
With cruel tread destroying hearts of men,
And laying waste their cities, and their toil
Spending in devastation, till they groaned :
“ A mockery devours us and the world ! ”
Then the dread monster vanished. Tenderly
Thereafter silence lulled the universe ;
And a fair crystal star rose from the deep
Like to a winged seraph, in her train
Leading the galaxies and systems on
With pomp triumphal. Rapturously I gazed,
Thinking “ It is the star of Bethелеhem ; ”

INTERLUDE

But sudden music shook the firmament
In sweeter tone than any mortal song,
Warbling aloft such golden melody
That all the new-born stars a-tip-toe leaned,
Twinkling in joyous wonder ; and its thrill
Disturbed my dream.

It was the nightingale,
Who held her solemn festival of song
Deep in the neighbouring grove, and thus alway
Warbled to ease her endless load of pain.
I rose bewildered, through my Celtic blood
A hundred mystic passions rioting,
And wailing at the portals of my soul
With inarticulate endeavouring lips,
Ever beseeching, offering the crown
Of fame and immortality, if I
Would lend a patient ear, and with true tongue
Interpret the enchantments they could tell.
But the night dew had chilled me ; so I hushed
Their voiceless cries, and o'er the meadow land
Strode swiftly to the shelter of the farm.

Which nearing through the orchard, soon I caught
My poet's accents murmuring on the night
In cadence tender as the melody
Of far-off foaming waters when the winds
Are laid asleep. I, turning to the sound,

INTERLUDE

Entered the odorous garden and its path
Followed amid old-fashioned flowers,—the rose
Most plentiful, but larkspur, lavender,
Carnation, and the climbing honeysuckle,
Sweet-william, starry night-stock, fuchsia-bells,
All strown profusive,—many more,—until
I reached the window whence I heard my friend.
Around the open casement jasmine twined ;
And sure, I thought, the sweetness of his song
Had lingered in the blossom till their hues—
If hues they owned—were mingled, as unto
The lovely rose-cheeked daughter of the home
He told the plaintive tale of Icarus.
She by an old-world spinet sat reclined,
With dreamy eyes, half-drooping, as a flower
Surcharged with dew ; he on a lowly stool
Crouched at her feet ; and through the casement, I
Then leaning, from the progress of the strain
Knew he had sung the proud adventurous flight,
And neared the story of his hero's death.

The Death of Icarus.

AN islet stands mid the Ionian foam,
Low-bosomed, naked, round whose iron walls,
No haven to the storm-spent mariner,
A hundred fangs jut scarce above the height
Of gathering waves when Ocean's troubled breast
Yearneth toward the moon. There, screaming shrill,
The sea-bird wheels, but finds not there her home ;
No mortal sound beside ; but lone and dread
The waters break for ever solemnly.

As from Charybdis or the Clashing Crag,
Stout sailors in their high-built argosies
Laden with glowing fruit and oil and wine,
To shun this lurking coast would turn their prows
Far northward, and uplift the gleaming sail,
With oars well plied, to reach more genial land
In haste, lest sudden gale or stemless tide
Seize unaware, and sweep their vessel down

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

All derelict, their strong forms on the rock
Hurled dying, where to death fell Icarus.

Giver of Health, Apollo, thine the beam
Which as a falchion smote him in bold flight
Soaring beyond the reach of human ken.
Thine the keen eye beholding when the sire,
Old subtle Cretan Dædalus, arrayed
His son in plumage like a giant bird :
Thine ear attentive listened to his thought
Devising the wild project, as he shook
Might of ethereal virtue on the wings :—
“ Thus with new strength about him, he shall mount
Ambitious—for I know the dream of youth—
And, spurning the low air of earth, shall tread
Realms inaccessible ere this, and reach
Olympus where the bright Immortals dwell.
He beauteous as a god shall enter in
Denied not ; for the earth’s aspiring sons,
Victorious, dear to mortals, are more dear
To gods, and welcome in their blest abode.
And smiling Hebe shall advance the cup
Before him, or young Ganymede outspread
Ambrosial food on massy gold, while through
The flower-stained courts of heaven his praises ring.”

Thus fondly thought the sire : but Icarus,

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Doomed by the jealous anger of the god,
Now dying lay upon this craggy isle.

In broken flight hurled downward from the sky,
Smitten by the meridian beam, he lay
Silent, with shattered beauty, in the chill
Dark agony of death ; while over him
Through the vast brazen vault Apollo rolled
His chariot on in triumph to the night.
To raise the pitying wail or drop a tear,
No nereid of the sobbing sighing sea,
Nor dolphin, like to that Arion knew
Friendly to hope-lorn mariners, dared leave
The depth of ocean : tender voice was none
Of Zephyrus consoling, or the warm
Love-breathing South : but shrill the sea-bird's cry ;
And the hoarse lashing billow on the rock
Resounding ever mournfully.

Till now

Old Darkness, foe of the retreating god,
Outspread her ample vesture through the sky,
Wherein big stars loomed weeping. Then anon
Was heard the silken melody of shells
Blown by the quaint-lipped tritons, and the chaunt
Of Ocean's children wailing as they shook
Their sea-green foamy hair. Around the isle
Slow circling came these choristers, their plaint

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Raising in tuneful murmur for such youth
And joyous beauty lost. And next the moon,
Her pearl-tinct forehead lifting from the wave,
Gazed sorrowfully, and with fingers pale
Soothed the torn limbs and sinews into calm.
Then the drear torment ceased ; and Icarus,
Like to a wearied infant, lay awhile
Dreaming, but soon his spent soul uttered thus :

“ What time the stern god frowned on me, I lay
Scorning to shed a tear. But ye I thank,
Whose tender pity like a dropping dew
Comes over me with sweetness : most of all
I deem me blest in nearing thus the end.
I have endured the wrath, and would endure
Woe thrice its strength malignant, on my head
Hurled by the outraged deity ; but life
Unsuccoured bears no more, and I must die.
Yet breath enough avails me to relate
Feebly to you, so gentle ministers,
A tale of wild emprise and sudden fall.

“ I, voyaging o’er the Ionian Sea,
Clove the blue ether joyous on broad wings
Framed by my father. He knew well the ire
Of Crete’s wise king, old Minos ; and to shun
The jealous wrath enveloped me in power

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Of glorious plumage like a giant bird,
And bade me track the ample sky, from Crete
Hasting to reach the land of Sicily.
Obedient to his will, I spread the vans,
And fondly cried adieu, and from the cliff
Leapt confident. The singing realm of air
Received me in its billows; but with poise
And conquering motion delicate and new,
Wrought in the tubes and texture volatile
By the renowned artificer, I rose,
Swinging serenely in the element,
Surging aloft triumphant, or propelled
On wide-arched pinions, as the sea-bird wheels
Scarce moving any feather in the wind—
She of the swift wind born.

“ But soon awoke
Strange passion in my childlike heart; and scheme
Of mad ambition thrilled me. On the sky
I turned my gaze, and hope seemed without end.
As rarely the high spirit of a dream
Descends to one who in lone vigil seeks
The heaven-born word, and, watching, spends the
 night
A-hungered, till at length the weary frame
Would droop; then through the tremblings of despair
Come snatches of wild unheard melody,
And glamour of new faith, enthralling him

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

With ravishing sweetness ; and his soul aspires
From realm to realm on swelling measure bold
Exalted, lost to earth and lost to men :—
So came this passion over me. I turned
Mine eyes, swift, penetrating, to the deep
Of silent heaven ; and, conscious of a power
Of unpremeditated rapturous hope,
Sprang upward, with my face against the sun,
Chaunting aloud a music which I felt
Flow through me. The bright pinions well sustained
My boundless heart : back rushing from my brow
The clustering curls spread sighing in the wind ;
The human burden of my earthly form
Fell, as a star falls, from me ; and I lived
But an embodiment of vast desire,
Immortal, plumed as never bird was plumed,
And hasting with my passion to its goal.

“ Not Otus and Ephaltes who assailed
Heaven’s dome with Ossa heaped on Pelion,
Neared daring as I neared ; and to the gate
Cloud-cinctured, I beheld the splendours come,
Gazing a-down to greet me, their sweet eyes
Far-beaming with a starry loveliness,
And locks by the ambrosial Zephyr blown
Weblike above the gulf. I caught the flame
That scintillated from their feet among

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Celestial flowers ; and in the distance knew
A golden rapture of harmonic tone
Dim swelling round the majesty of Zeus.

“ Then from his fiery car Apollo smote
Wrathful, and pierced my being through and through ;
And pain consumed me. But as down I fell,
O'er tumbled, tumbled, in the hurtling wind,
I saw the god with dark indignant brow
Lean from the rolling vortex of his car
Above me ; then I crashed upon the rock
With life and body shattered,—and still lie
Sustained by his dark glance in wondrous calm.

“ O Python-Slayer, Leader of the Nine
Whose voices sound unending symphony
In praise of mortal loveliness and power,—
Who nurse heroic virtues in the soul,
And do extol ambition when its eyes
Are lifted up in fearless purity,—
If crime were mine deserving of the doom
I suffer, know I suffer without word
Or thought regretful : for how can the gods
Upbear the load of sovereignty, and rule
In justice, firm and bountiful to all,
If men deny their lordship ? They are wise,
And set on human attributes a bar

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Past which is no achievement, save with pain
And sorrowing of all mortality :
Their lives are equable, their laws are true.

“ A little must I grieve thus perishing ;
For youth and joyous energy bestow
Such glamour on existence, that no slave
Possessing them would perish willingly.
But more than all I grieve for Dædalus,
The skilled artificer, my father old,
Whose fond gaze followed me o’er many a
league
Departing, and who now will deem me safe
In Sicily, where he must journey soon.
He loses me while compassing my weal.

“ The father loses, but the son doth gain.
O pardon me, you gentle ministers,
If word and thought too arrogantly flow
From one thus dying :—treasure bright I win
Beyond all dull comparison ; and though
My being on the winds shall be dispersed,
And my frail semblance prisoned in the home
Of gloomy Dis, yet shall my essence dwell
Immortal, with the beauty of a hope
Environed ever, ever wondrously
Alluring youthful spirits on to heaven.

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

“ Ah ! such chill death comes over me ! but I
Am joyous, and cry welcome to its calm.
My life was erst the burden of a song
Moving to child-like innocence, each way
O’erladen with the sweetness of young dreams ;
Then vast desire pulsed through me, till I strove
With one intense endeavour to achieve
Heights inaccessible—and failed ! So now
I drink the cup of mortal agony
Unflinching ; and for childhood pure obtain
Deep knowledge of immeasurable woe,
Which makes the perfect man.

“ And thus, farewell ! .

But listen ! . . Down the amplitude of sky,
Where stars grow dim, a music like the tone
Of some great Mother weeping falls on me ;
And where the moon, as one in sudden fright,
Reels darkly from her way, the patient brows
Of Saturn and Prometheus faintly peer
Leaning toward me tenderly, with eyes
In godly radiance kindled, and their lips
Smiling to speed the journey as I go. . .
Farewell, thou shattered mansion of my soul.”

.
O tune the shell, ye tritons quaint, to woe ;
Lift now your voices, creatures of the deep ;
All nereids of the sobbing sighing sea,

THE DEATH OF ICARUS

Wail softly, and your foamy locks unbind
In mourning for the death of Icarus.
But most of all, sweet sirens, from the shore
Nigh dreaded Scylla's cavern, come and raise
About this isle your doleful melody ;
For never more like siren was a child
Of earthly parent born than Icarus :
Sing, sing, amid the dark your pitying hymn.
The silent stars have shrouded up their eyes
Compassionate ; dim sorrow veils the moon ;
Tears in the soft wind linger ; Ocean stirs
And chaunts aloud his requiem of peace.

Finale.

THIS ending to the tale, sweet Dora rose—
Our maiden hostess ; and as one who dwells
Amid companion lilies—such a grace
Moved round her—she prepared a midnight meal :
Bread her fair hands had kneaded ; butter fresh
Of her own churning ; and her dairy's store
Of cheese and milk. We gratefully partook ;
And I besought her pardon, that an hour
When Nature bade all guileless hearts to rest,
Should yet behold our city-keeping ways
Disturb their better custom. Courteously
She answered, that her sire three hours ago,
With drowsy eyes and heaviness of tread,
Had taken to his couch ; but she indeed
Wished not to slumber lovely night away ;
And often at her casement sat alone
Dreaming, or with her book, beneath the stars,
Until their ancient timepiece sounded twelve.

FINALE

And she so loved the harmony of verse,
Or bound in tinkling rhyme, or in the flow
Of lordlier style and rhythm, such as old
Blind Milton framed to tell of Paradise,
That, let the hour be what it may, no song
Could weary her, were but the singer true.

Thus spake the gentle girl ; and while her tongue
Dropped syllables melodious as the chime
Of bells that wake a meadowland where sheep
Roam grazing, my dear poet left his meal
Untouched, and in the music sat enchained.
Which noticing, a deeper hue betinged
The rose, soft stealing on her brow : I smiled :
She bade a faint " Good-Night," and to the door
Moved slowly : the bard opened it with hand
Reluctant, his half-hesitating eyes
Scarce seeing her, such tender reticence
Breathed through him ; then with pensive mien he
sat
Beside me, and we ended our repast.

So quickly sped the darkness into day ;
And soon a month lit poppies in the corn
Far blazing. Then regretfully we turned
To city haunts once more ; and at the wheel
Of uncongenial labour, nigh forgot

FINALE

Earth's beauty, such grim strife we waged to live.
But most my gentle poet felt his doom,
As, pent in weary dungeon, he pursued
An endless round of triviality,
By animal companionship and sloth
Derided, till, the burden overgrown,
He fell with it, and stumbled on a grave.

O golden joy of friendship, and the beam
Of manly love ! how many of us grope
Earth's way without your sweetness ; but how few
Have known, as was my happiness to know
Brief while, a spirit of rare purity,
Whose life was stamped so clearly on his brow
That not a thought disturbed him, but his friend
Might read and answer it. Too early gone !—
Thine was the mortal recompense of power,
Calm, undiverted by an erring world,
Not bending to earth's lust, but stedfastly,
However rank the food of labour grew,
Pursuing a vast purpose in disdain,
Till like a shattered column thou didst fall.

To me remains the boundless memory :
There oft on summer evenings in the charm
Of twilight, I retrace the meadowlands
Of Devon with the spirit of my friend.

FINALE

We hear the lark and throstle ; nightingales
Peal round us ; and beside the old farm door,
Tending her fragrant roses, like a rose
In beauty, Dora stands, through all the years
Unchanged, I think unchangeable. Dear maid,
I could have learned to love thee, and my friend
Assuredly did love ; but in the maze
We wander, who can know himself or thee ?

SONNETS: A SEQUENCE.

I.

Proem.

WHAT of the theme all other themes above?

O true enchantment of the poet's tongue,
Thou, old as dreaming earth, as nature young,
Almighty, symbolled in the innocent dove

And god-like serpent . . . mystery whereof
Than human hymn far lordlier tones have rung
Through an infinitude when angels sung . . .
What praise shall be sufficient unto Love?

Sweet sweet allurements, joined with Faith and Hope!

E'en Heaven without Thee were a dream so frail
That whitest footsteps on the path would fail;

Yet do I know Thee in thy wilder scope,—

A mocking spirit of the homeless gale,
A darkness wherein Life and Beauty grope.

SONNETS

II.

Heart's Depth.

I WONDER if thou knowest, little one,
With what unfailing tenderness I brood
About thee, watching thy each changeful mood :
The pensive gloom, as shadows cloud the sun ;
The smile that beameth when the clouds are done ;
Thy softest grace, when, silent and subdued,
Thou dreamest on thy life in solitude,
Of them who failed thee and of them who won.
Thou knowest not : O woman, couldst thou see,
One moment, at the ebbing of Life's tide,
Into the rocky fastness of my heart,
And trace what graven numbers there abide,
And learn the secret they alone impart—
Thou shouldst be mine throughout Eternity !

A SEQUENCE

III.

Heaven's Music.

WHEN thou, sweet mortal, traversing Earth's way,
Didst break upon my spirit's utterance,
Flinging my passion to the winds at play,
And mastering my wishes with a glance
Of faith supreme and solemn radiance,
Till every thought and purpose owned thy sway,
And I moved onward as a thing in trance,
My heart bowed down to wonderment alway ;—
When, clothed in serene light of friendship sure,
Like a new planet mounting through the skies,
Thy presence o'er my slumbering soul did rise,—
I think I touched the margin of Life's shore,
And heard—and now shall hear for evermore—
The music of the infinite mysteries.

SONNETS

IV.

Love-Singing.

PAUSE, O Beloved, in thy pilgrimage :

The reed I tune is sweet to thee. Along

The woody meadow Nature's evensong

Falls in low utterance beautiful ; dim age

Droops down on twilight-pinion to assuage

The weary and dissolve in good the wrong ;

"Peace, lovely Peace," forever breathes the tongue

Within my soul. . . Beloved, read this page.

My God is seated on his starry throne

Unfolding wide above me ; many a dream

On yonder wondrous firmament is shown,

Mysterious weavings of eternal beam :

My God, Beloved, unto thee is known,

And of thy life and thought is he the theme.

A SEQUENCE

V.

The Bouquet.

TAKE these vale-lilies, dear, for purity ;
And, for deep stedfast truth, these sweet blue-
bells ;
These zephyr-blossoms, stored with hidden spells
To charm the morrow ; hawthorn,—hopes for me ;
And monkshood,—thy knight's emblem it shall be ;
“ Here's pansies, that's for thoughts,” Ophelia tells ;
And ivy, in whose tendrils friendship dwells ;
And aloes, for dull grief's monotony ;
With poppies' consolation ; eglantine ;
And violets take ; and, ere his petals close,
A passion-flower for that faith of thine ;
Then wreathe this olive for thy soul's repose. . .
Ah stay, Beloved ! turn thy lips to mine :
Richer than all, I pray thee take this Rose.

SONNETS

VI.

A Dream.

I DREAMED I stood where morning splendour shone
Reflected in the dew : green bowering trees
Unburdened a sweet sighing to the breeze ;
And at my feet a brooklet, drowsing on,
Slid between sudden banks, where, one by one,
Rich blossoms opened to the honey-bees ;
And lark and throstle tuned their melodies
In the dim distance welcoming the sun.
Then saw I nearing swiftly 'twixt the stems
Of many an antique beech and gnarled oak,
A white-robed spirit of the morning fair,
Who cried : " Lo ! mine are Love's bright diadems,"
Who seized my hand and twined it in her hair ;
But ere her lips might kiss me I awoke.

VII.

Spirit Memories.

I KNOW thou wert a queen in bygone days :
We two then wandered in Italia's land,
And knelt true votaries at Love's command,
And vowed through life and death to tell his praise.
Oft didst thou listen to Petrarca's lays
In the sweet Tuscan, near some murmurous strand
At sundown hour, or where low breezes fanned
Delicious air from flowery woodland ways.
And by a dim *ruscello*, lady fair,
In the lone forest-world I watched thee sleep,
A broken moonbeam tangled in thy hair ;
Meanwhiles I wakened strains of melody
That winged thy soul through realms of splendour,
deep
As rolling ether of the midnight sea.

SONNETS

VIII.

Kisses.

DEAR LADY, take these kisses one by one,
And what of fragile words about them twine :
First for thy brow says "God's own peace be
thine ;"
And for each soul-full eye a whispered "None
So radiant—may true visions break upon
Their sleep ;" for thy gold hair—"Love, thou
art mine ;
And this in worship, if thou ask a sign ;"
And for thy neck—"Sweet, I am most undone,
But this for passion, this for pride, O queen :"
And many rarer kisses, such whereof
Do only kings and poets know the song ;
Then in completion—at thy lips unseen
My trembling spirit mute shall stand a long
Deep moment, ere thy spirit answer "Love."

A SEQUENCE

IX.

Glamours.

SHOULD moonlight steal upon thy ruffled pillow,
And all thy soul be buried in a dream ;
Should Life a barge of golden splendour seem
Borne on the azure rolling of Time's billow ;
And, through the ample measure of thy dreaming,
Sad as the last lone sunset o'er the sea,
Should moving angels waft a symphony
From silver lutes among pale planets gleaming :—
Ah, Love, my Love ! it may be that thine eyes
Withal so wonderful can little see ;
And in thine ear the murmurous rapture caught
Is dissonance of one-time melody :
God is around us, and we know him not :
His raiment trembles through the starry skies.

SONNETS

X.

Love's Stedfastness.

BELOVED, that the sunset hues have died !
Beloved, that the autumn splendours wane,
And perished leaves are hounded o'er the plain
By the fierce wind unmerciful ! O pride
Of bloomtime and the golden harvest-tide—
How they roll on, Beloved, a wild train
Of eddying change, nigh, it would seem, in vain—
A moment cursed, a moment glorified !
Yet this we cannot mourn, who view above
The seasons' mutability his hand
Eternal who doth bid all nature move
In an unaltering course, and understand
How he, the Changeless One, doth change command,
To prove the staid magnificence of Love.

A SEQUENCE

XI.

Change and Doom.

SERENELY on the wings of Love thus far,
To melody past utterance I sung
All voluble in spirit, and among
Rapt angels, each a joyous minister,
Soared to attain a still-receding star,
Nor knew the growing falsehood in my tongue,
Till Love in anger on my vision flung
A dark impenetrable barrier.
But for a space, ere yet the accents fell
Bewildered, or the spirit in me drooped
Faltering, downcast, wearied of the lie
'Gainst which it strove, a presence o'er me stooped
Beautiful as the lightning, and did cry :
"Here shalt thou choose; and choice brings
heaven or hell."

SONNETS

XII.

Dream and Choice.

LADY, if I, who know thee as thou art,
Should speak in accents faintly tuned and low
A dream thou ponderedst long long ago,
But, fearing in soft Hope an endless smart,
Didst bury it thine utmost aim apart,
Didst bid the world swing on and chaunt her woe,
Bringing thee joy or pain—no matter!—so
The battle flagged not to thy dauntless heart. . .
What wouldst thou say, O Lady, if perchance
My tongue so feeble stumbled on that theme
Well nigh forgotten in the tear-veiled past ;
And, caught from glory on thy countenance,
I told God's own fulfilment of thy dream,
And offered my own soul to thee at last ?

A SEQUENCE

XIII.

The Tears.

I SAW thee weep ; and looming in thine eyes
A piteous soul gazed through the mist of tears ;
Then o'er my anguished mind conflicting Fears
Rushed in mad tumult, uttering doleful cries ;
Wherefore my tongue was silent, though I strove
Within me to believe I could undo
The strong enchantment that upon us grew—
This strong enchantment, this most wondrous Love!
But now the Fears have conquered every part,
And Love himself is fearful even as they,
And wheresoe'er I turn is no repose.
Oh, that thy tears might open out a way !
O God forgive me for the vow I chose !
O thou forgive, and spurn me from thy heart !

SONNETS

XIV.

Consolation.

THE tears, sweet Lady, I have wept with you
Are tears of bitter promise ; yet indeed
I hold them consolation in our need,
And soothing to our spirits through and through
As manna in the wilderness, or dew
By pitying angels dropped on hearts that bleed ;
And my soul rests upon them as the seed
Of blessing which unto your soul is due.
But grant me your forgiveness ! and believe
I have not wholly sinned in this thing done :
For in my troubled heart methinks I see
As 'twere a stern and lovely benison
Shaped for us by some mightier Destiny,
Calling us both to love and both to grieve.

A SEQUENCE

XV.

The Farewell.

WHEN first our eyes met, and I bowed to thee,
There seemed a radiance fall upon the land ;
And when in friendship thou didst give thy hand,
Whispered a tender music over me—
“Twin spirits, hurled toward one destiny.”
Oh Lady mine, thou too didst understand,
And wast, as I, all powerless to command
Such an inevitable stern decree.
Then blame me not as wholly wrong for this ;
And, since the fruit is bitterness and gall,
Turn not in hate away, but with me rise
And seek what consolation may befall :
Joy can be ours, even failing utmost bliss,
And years of peace lovely as Paradise.

LYRICAL POEMS AND SONNETS.

Prelude.

FRIEND, were the songs I wrote
Wild as the ocean's sway,
Or sweet as a lone bird's note
That startles the dying day,
Then a prelude I would play.
But such not mine : my lute
Just woke in the twilight grey,
And ere darkness fled was mute.

He said : “ Your heart is all of gold.”

HE said : “ Your heart is all of gold ;”
And warmth of gold came over me.
He raised my hand most tenderly,
It trembling at a touch so bold.

He said : “ The million stars that glow
Have lost their light within your eyes ;
And sad and wonderful surmise
Is shadowed on your pearl-like brow.”

And was it song or was it prayer
Which through that silent hour I heard ?
And then my soul rose like a bird,
As down he leaned and kissed my hair.

Proserpina.

Lo Proserpina, she whose eyes are full
Of wild despair, and want, and endless woe :
Along the darkling valley doth she go,
Clad in that beauty death might not annul,
But drooping, drooping, through a region dull,
With aimless discontent, and mutterings low
Of melancholy gloom's triumphal show,
And sighs e'en bodeful Lethe fails to lull.
She is the queen of unrelenting doom ;
And hers the swell of heavy hopeless breath,
Sweet tuned to whisper indolently low,
Or sway with passion from the lips of death :
She once was garlanded with Springtime bloom ;
The withered leaves are on her forehead now.

Eos.

THE night hath shook her melancholy wing,
 Of rest grown weary ; one angelic star
 Of all her vanquished host weeps down afar,
 A patience of exalted sorrowing ;
 Dark wanes ; and Hope throughout the world doth
 fling
 That sweetness whereof she is minister ;
 Once more the pale Hours roll dawn's gate ajar,
 And Eos enters from her journeying.

She cometh, oh, she cometh ! Wonderfully
 Upon her brow is wreathed the flaming rose,
 As, to enchanted music soft and rare,
 She smiles above the margin of the sea :
 Beautiful are her eyes ; and through her hair
 Apollo's radiance ever grows and grows.

The Lotus-Eaters.

(*A Fragment.*)

. . . O THE sweet wine!—the lotus-bloom!
As on elysian plains the asphodel
Waves dreamily, and slakes our souls in song,
When, after passing o'er the mournful seas,
At morning-time we near the land of rest.

[*A soft voice sings :*]

Tenderly and sweet and low
The long surges sigh ;
Warm delicious perfumes flow
Down the saffron sky.
Noble Heroes take their rest
In these Islands of the Blest.
—See, they near !
How the deep-prowed vessel glides
Gloomlike o'er the foamless tides ;
And the rowers wearily
Chaunt the music of the sea,
Half forgetting what is past,
Happy to reach home at last.

LYRICAL POEMS

But the stately Heroes sit

 In the vessel's prow : .

Their sad eyes with joy are lit,

 Joy is on their brow.

Night is over ; storms are done ;

All the weary race is run.—

Toil hath sapped their youth and might ;

Pain hath seared them in the fight ;

Age hath struggled with their blood ;

Death beholds them unsubdued.—

But the days of labour end :

Gently from the ship they bend—

 Raise the water to their lips—

Smile to know their journey's o'er. . .

 Ah ! the thread of being slips :

They have reached the other shore ;

Peace surrounds them evermore.

Ballade of Friendship.

WHEN in the Light of new-born days
Men first beheld the flowers and trees,
A shadow moved down Earth's fair ways,
And saddened her soft melodies ;
And through all Haunts of ancient Peace
The sweetest paths were still and cold,
And in delight no heart found ease,
Till Friendship strung her Harp of Gold.

So when on me the silver rays
Of Morning broke o'er Life's young seas,
With weeping eyes I viewed the maze
Of Nature's pitiless decrees,
Till languor drooped in every breeze,
And Laughter failed, and Hearts grew old,
And tottering Hope sunk on her knees ;—
Then Friendship strung her Harp of Gold.

Ah ! let pure Friendship have all praise
In lovelier thought and words than these,

LYRICAL POEMS

Till sweeter visions fill our gaze
 Made clear of dim infirmities ;
 Till eager spirits gain release,
And, lost to earth, our lips grow bold
 Among celestial harmonies,
Where Friendship strings her Harp of Gold.

L'ENVOY.

Prince of the vast Eternities,
Master and Monarch uncontrolled,
 Thine is the Form my spirit sees
When Friendship strings her Harp of Gold.

Sonnet.

ONE sole sweet dream I cherished in my heart.

Like ivy on a ruined tower it grew,

And twined its knotted tendrils through and
through

Deep fissures, and renewed each mouldering part
With leaves of Hope, stout Courage, gentle Art;

And birds amid the foliage built, and threw

Soft melodies across the morning dew,

Till music into all my life did start.

And now I know my dream was but a lie. . .

Thick darkness cloaks my soul; the mocking wind

Howls thunderously on half-dismantled walls. . .

Ah God, how closely is this dream entwined !

In hideous wrack the tottering fabric falls—

Yet—yet I cannot lose it though I die.

Hope.

AFTER THE PAINTING BY G. F. WATTS, R.A.

HER mystic harp she tunes beneath a sky
Forlorn of singing stars, so chill and grey ;
And through her tender frame emotions sway,
Wistful, as if her ponderings deny
The splendour of eternal destiny ;
And blinded are her eyes, nor ever may
She *wish* to cast the darkening folds away,
Till the last chord is broke, her harp laid by.
Then shall her spirit wonderingly behold
A loveliness of morning in the skies ;
And sweet, as from celestial harps unstrung,
Triumphal tune of Love and Faith shall rise :
Her hymn shall waken with exultant tongue
Of Life in its supreme enchantment rolled.

Sonnet.

I SEEK to cull the humble flowers that glow
In pensive loveliness about my feet,
To plant them in this page, where Summer heat,
Autumnal storm-blast, and the Winter snow,
On their unfading hues may come and go.
Till their soft eyes our children's eyes shall greet,
Half-smiling with the message they repeat ;
Or let them fade, if God will have it so.
What matters? Yet with joy I'll tend them well,
That neither cankering worm nor loathsome blight
Waste their exceeding loveliness away ;
And ever shall they bring my soul delight ;
And, haply, one, beholding them, shall say—
" Whence came so sweet and rare a miracle ? "

Lines to a Friend.

FRIEND, we are wanderers from afar ;
And dim has been the devious road
That from the primal high abode
Led hither, to this little star.

Our souls not clearly catch the hymn
Learned in those nigh-forgotten lands ;
Fierce earthly toil hath marred our hands ;
Our eyes with earth are very dim :

But there is fulness in desires,
And passion in earth's beauty still ;
And sky and sea and forest thrill
With rapture of celestial lyres.

What though our hearts *are* worn and grey ?
Anon some lovelier chord shall sweep
Tumultuous, trembling, from the Deep
Whose poles the exultant angels sway :

AND SONNETS

And we shall taste the dews of spring,
And learn the things of youth again ;
Our hearts shall open unto pain,
As flowers in their blossoming

Spread to the bitter winds that blast
Their young delight and all their hues :
And we shall deeplier feel, and use
Our knowledge perfectly—at last.

.
Friend, are my words so strangely lost
In clouds of splendour and despair,
That, if a gleam is anywhere
Of wonder, 'tis a gleam at most ?

Thou knowest : and our souls are strong :
We can not falter in a night
Of million planets burning bright,
Where many a rich voice chaunts his song.

Toll the Bell Heavily.

TOLL the bell heavily—

Day is done !

Down the dim westward

Sinks the sun ;

Night with her warm delight

Now is begun.

Soft is the song-born

Ocean-sigh ;

Sobs of recurrent

Melody.—

Dream on, Lonely One,—

I am nigh.

Hushed is the awful

Deep of heaven :

Sphere and wild planet

Silently driven

Through the vast chasm

In God's side riven !

AND SONNETS

Lost is the shrilling
 Wail of fear ;
Only the night wind,
 Roaming near,
Sings, as if angel-wings
 Wafted here.

Toll the bell heavily—
 Day is done !
But, ere the still night's
 Course be run,
Thy soul shall awaken,
 Lonely One.

Evening.

SHADES fall over the meadow ;
Valley and wood and hill
Faint in the deepened evening's
Mantle still.

Only the town's dun outline
Tells that mankind is near ;
Hangs but a star in heaven
Lone and clear.

Faintly a bell's far booming
Bids man from labour cease ;
Winds, like a benediction,
Whisper peace.

Maybe that feet of angels
Over the earth have trod,
Leaving for toil-worn mortals
Links with God.

Sonnet.

HER spirit left us ; and our hearts we bowed
In stern submission, but in anguished pain,
While from our eyes the tears fell down like rain,
Like sad rain falling from a winter cloud.
“ O Love, O Lord of Life,” we wept aloud,
“ Are Youth and Faith and Promise all so vain
That this one soul might not with us remain ? . . . ”
And then, enfolded in her snowy shroud,
Beneath the cold earth, cold and still as she,
We left her, covered with white flowers of Spring,
Where birds poured forth their tremulous melody.
And now we know our sighs and tears should cease,
Lest we might grieve her with our sorrowing,
And waken tears in her sweet home of peace.

Sonnet.

IN what dull cavern pent, O Life, art thou,
 With hoarsely dissonant and wrathful stream?
 I tracked thy waters from the morning beam;
 But gloom hath soon encompassed thee; and now
 My path is rock-bound, lost, while blow on blow
 Confounds me from Oppression's arm supreme;
 And I am left the mockery of a dream,
 Worn heart and limbs, torn feet and aching brow.

Great Nature! I whose infancy besought
 Thy succouring breast—let me not vainly call,
 Nor in the deeps of thine unuttered thought
 Find but a stony glance implacable:
 Though Fortitude, though Love avail me not,
 Grant thy pure wisdom, and I conquer all.

Sonnet.

LULLED down to calm the tempest sobs away ;
The infant, wearied, sinks in lovely sleep
Upon his mother's bosom ; shadows creep
Like silent phantoms round the ebbing day ;
Those who of earth owned mortal passion's sway
Their limbs in hushed monotony shall steep ;
Long course-bound floods burst on the mighty deep,
To dream in ocean's vast content always.
And Life in sombre majesty rolls on
Toward its bourn of peace—Eternity ;
All linger for a moment and are gone,
Gathered to that unbounded restful sea :
Love—which is God—Love was and is alone
Unshored, unfathomed, and shall ever be.

The Sea-weed's Song.

ALONG the ocean-streams, from far
Fair emerald isles I come to you ;
From waters of serener blue,
Not gazed on by the Northern Star.

I passed beside enchanted caves,
Where, siren-like, the mermaid's song
Rang through the darkness all night long
To mariners upon the waves.

I passed where forest-tresses hung
Their clouds o'er shallows silvery pale :
Through moonless hours the nightingale
Upswelled his tuneful throat and sung.

I passed where fairest earth distils
Her blossoms with sweet odours wet ;
I plunged below where God hath set
The huge foundations of the hills ;

AND SONNETS

And over surges waste and wild,
Untouched by keel, by oar unstirred,
Where evermore the voice is heard
Of Ocean singing to her Child.

Now all is past. To thee I come,
Glad in the end to be at peace.
The winter storm brings dear release;
And thou—O take me to thy home.

To the Sea.

O MIGHTY sea, who thunderest thy song,
 And rearest up thy neck unto the cloud,
 As one in wrath, self-striving, fierce, and proud,
 Self-chained, as thou thy caverned deeps among—
 Hear me, O hear, wild sea! enhance my tongue
 With thy soul's utterance, swift and pure and loud,
 Or fold thy breath about me like a shroud,
 And pour me as a balm upon Life's wrong!
 Life—in whose cup the pearl-streamed wine grows
 dull,
 Whose eyes whilom were bright with star-born
 joy—
 Weeping she stands forlorn: her breast is full
 Of strange turmoil; big shadows round her roll;
 Hope wanders far, and Faith has crept to die. . .
 Great Ocean! flood thy triumph through her soul.

Sonnet.

As weed that sails on the careering sea,
Frail derelict of songful ocean-tides :
Unheedfully, unhelpfully, it rides,
Swayed hither whence, or whither swayed to be,
Not caring, but in dreamlike memory
As in a solitary world abides ;
And winged desire droops near it, on all sides
Mocked by the ceaseless blast's monotony.
So is my song upon Life's waters borne,
Ah, whence I cannot tell ! and as the weed
All derelict my straying soul hath passed
Her home of promise, hungering to return ;
And the triumphant music of the blast
Rings as if heaven were mocking at my need.

Sonnet.

WHAT though the sluggish river of To-day
 Through marsh and sandbank fretfully prolong
 His journey, with huge waters rift among
 A hundred dwarfish channels, every way
 Choked up with derelicts of Yesterday,
 Betainted now and weakling, erst so strong ;
 Yet shall the pent course end with evensong,
 And falling Night renew his kingly sway.

To-morrow !—ere To-morrow well can be,
 Beneath the wandering stars and silent moon
 Sweet nightingales must chaunt their interlude
 Till earth and heaven shall respond in tune ;
 And just beyond the daybreak we shall see
 A fitful glimmer of Infinitude.

To a Modern Aspasia.

I know thee ; and the calm upon thy brow
Is not the reflex of an unstirred soul ;
Nor are thy faintly smiling lips a scroll
Whereon in peace thy shining hopes avow
Life's promise ; nor sweet faith sits there ; but thou
Art clouded in the shadowy control
Of vast unuttered yearnings for a goal
Not mortal eye can reach, nor spirit know.
Thus art thou on empyreal billows hurled
O'er heights of thought immeasurably vain,
And findest there no home, nor place of rest ;
Thy longings claim no brotherhood with men ;
Thine eyes are deep with anguish unexpressed ;
Thou seest nought of beauty in the world.

To Shakespeare.¹

ALLURED by wondrous Orphean melodies,
 We seek the temple where thy skill commands,
 In Life's proud mansion reared by deathless hands
 Beside the waters of primeval peace.
 A human sweetness doth pervade the hall;
 And breathing words inflame our hearts like wine—
 Words spirit-winged, half human, half divine—
 On tremulous lips a language magical. . .
 There tragedy unveils her awful eyes;
 Innocence, kingship, revelry, pain, strife,
 Fear, passion, calm—a thousand symbols rise
 In glowing vesture of immortal life:
 And, throned above the mighty concourse, thou
 Art brooding with impenetrable brow.

¹ Written for the Shakespeare-Day Commemoration, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1906.

The Poet's Song.

(A Fragment.)

NOT as the mighty Bard I come,
Whom Dante in his roaming saw
An exile to eternal Law,
Beyond the darkness of the tomb.

No flaming brand nor clanging shield
To lead the adoring hosts I bear :
Armour of gentleness I wear,
And Love the falchion that I wield.

Beneath my foot the way is strown
With jagged rock and cruel thorn ;
Around, the sea of human scorn
Rolls fierce, by winds of rancour blown.

Terror surrounds, yet nought I fear :
My gaze is fixed afar, where beams
The ideal Beauty of my dreams,
Which still recedes as still I near.

LYRICAL POEMS

My path is barred by human woe :
I drink the bitter tears that fall
From sorrow, pain, and wrath, till all,
Dissolving in my bosom, glow

Pure flowers of tenderness and Love,
Glow words compassionate and sweet
To soothe the aching heart, replete
With manna from the God above.

O Him, the Master Soul, I view
Reflected everywhere : the flower
Builds on His form, and all her dower
Of perfume breathes of Him ; the dew

Gleams with His brightness ; and the song
Of birds is full of Him ; the glow
Of sunset tells His splendour ; low
Deep voicings of the murmurous throng

Of forest leaves and rolling waves
Are His ; the creatures of the storm
Bear in their chariot His form ;
Within the shining stream He laves.

.

AND SONNETS

Dante.

On my turning from his "Commedia" to the "Vita Nuova," and again to the "Commedia."

I SAW him as through Italy
An exile sad and worn he passed ;
His voice came like a clarion-blast
Proclaiming righteousness to be ;

And thus I thought : " Behold this king
Whose anthem sternly flows and strong :
His soul hath melted in Love's song,
His youth hath been a tender thing ;

" And for the peerless Beatrice
Did his heart beat and life-blood flow :
Now—wearied, sad, and old—even now
Only in her may be his peace."

Then, when I turned me to the page
Of gentleness and love and fears,
Of sweetest praise and deepest tears,
Wherein his soul found harbourage,—

LYRICAL POEMS

And saw the city he held best,
His city, veiled in splendours dim,
As there his Love saluted him,
And in her smiling made him blest,—

And saw youth laugh within his eyes,
While round him all the bloom of Spring
Leapt at the season's whispering
Till Summer breathed along the skies,—

I thought : " The cup is at his lips " :—
But lo ! the Wine was dashed away ;
Dark turmoil sunk upon the day ;
Sweet fetters changed to scorpion-whips

That drave him through the bitterness
And sorrow of infernal woe
Far as a mortal mind could go,
Until he caught heaven's star-trailed dress,

And heard the murmur of God's peace
Throughout the infinite abode,—
Until with hers his spirit rode
Among the trembled harmonies,—

Until from circling spheres he caught
The deathless accents of his song,

AND SONNETS

Anthem on anthem rolled along
The golden heights of towering thought—

Dante ! I kiss thy book again :
 Not any like to thee hath trod
 From darkest darkness unto God
Of all our myriad million men.

Thy greatness who shall fitly sing ?
 I hail thee in thy Love secure ;
 I name thee purest of the pure,
Most wise, most gentle poet-king.

The Poet to His Lady.

I THANK thee, Lady, for thy gentleness,
 And for thy stedfast spirit in an hour
 When Life drooped on worn pinion wearily,
 And when no impulse stirred my faltering soul
 To swift achievement of a mighty aim.
 Know this the proof of loveliness within :—
 Two souls may toil together on a road
 With many joys attending them : how sweet
 The mutual help, and patient love unchanged,
 When the strife conquers and the heart sinks down,—
 The succouring arm, and tender word of hope,
 The consolation, guidance firm, and song ;
 And other blessings nobly beautiful.
 But to be patient, tenderly serene,
 Health-giving in pure loveliness, and still
 A minister of deep encouragement,
 As thou wert in the darkness unto me,
 When faith was gone, and purpose on the winds
 Lay scattered, and the mystery of doom
 Swept round us everywhere, lit by no beam

AND SONNETS

Of promise save thy spirit's radiance ;—
This were sure proving of thy heavenly soul !
O when forlorn on that bare track we stood
Doubting, and far beneath us caught the roll
Of giant desolation mournfully
Triumphant, and upon our worn limbs felt
The shattering wind of measureless despair,
Before whose blasts the wan stars died, till dread
Consumed us through : in that chill time alone,
To soothe our naked spirits who *could* sing ?—
Not I ! but thou in thy great gentleness,
Finding an isle of peace amid the storm—
A sheltering isle,—or in the desert wide
Thy own heart an oasis, where the sound
Of limpid waters fell, and cooling shade
Drooped low,—didst make a music of new hope,
When hope was none, and chid me for my fear,
And bade me rise, and be a universe
Unbounded in the vastness of myself. . .

Lady, I thank thee for thy gentleness.
And though from heaven the mists are blown away,
And the dark track whereon we erst did stand,
As chained upon a storm-racked pinnacle,
Is broken in the glory of a road
Hung with empyreal splendours wonderfully,
And sweet with joy,—I know not which is best ;

LYRICAL POEMS

But know that in the darkness thy pure beam
Was lovelier, and amid the jarring noise
Of elements thy music never failed :
And did the choice now come, there would I dwell,
If thou wouldst drop thy comfort over me.

A Dedication.

YOU love the flowers ; and, could I choose,
My hands would pluck them all for you,—
Lily and Violet and Rose—
Flowers—flowers of every hue.

You love the songs : ah ! sweet it were
Through one eternal cloudless May,
To be your gentle minister,
And charm your soul away.

I have no flower ; and half my song
Is songless ; yet while hearts are true,
You will forgive a faltering tongue
That strove its best for you.

HOPE :
A FRAGMENT OF A DREAM.

Prelude.

BECAUSE the tide of Life had ebbcd, and through
Earth's darkness all her promises were dim,
My soul was very weary of its toil,
And fain I was to die and be at peace.
For on my house the hand of Death had fallen
So heavily, that wife and crowing babe
And mother at one bitter blow had sunk
Into the gaping chasm of the grave.
Alone and all alone for ever more,
Upon my downland by the moaning sea,
Tending my piteous flock at noon and eve,
At morntime or beneath the swimming stars,
Must I now wander, hapless and forlorn!
Alas, alas, how like my erring sheep!
But I had none to guide me, none to say :
" Ah, little fondling, underneath thy feet
The rocks are harsh : step neither here nor there,
The pitfalls else will take thee, gentle one ;
And yon crag splinters down to sudden doom."
More happy sheep, not left alone as I !

PRELUDE

With lamentation thus, I led my flock
That browsed the scanty herb, their mouths held low,
So meek and gentle, and their wayward feet
Wandering o'er hillock or through little dell
In satisfied desire ; or, by the moon,
I sat, enchained in many a silver dream,
Where sharp crags interspaced with yellow sands
Broke on the voiceful ocean in his peace.

O woman that I loved, and little child,
My darling, and thou tenderest one of all
Whose golden lips had kissed mine infant brow,
Whose hand had blessed me when my day was young—
Sweet guardians of a measureless delight—
Night bringers when ye left me thus alone,
When in the darkness I forgot to pray,
Though still I knew ye moved among the stars !

Pale, silent, weak, I grew, irresolute,
But hastening to die, when through this sleep
Called Life came mightily a splendour clad
In all-pervading wonder of a dream ;
And from his heaven an angel of the Lord
Passed down, and in his arms uplifted me,
And, swiftly, on his flaming rainbow wings,
Clove the thin ether skyward.

You to whom

Such things are lovely, listen to my song.

.

Hope.

PART I.

SOFT radiance and wonder of a dream,
In whose prevailing sanctity my song
Would spread its little sails upon a sea
Unsounded yet by ringing oar or keel ;
Like those adventurous mariners of old,
Who to Orphéan melodizing stirred
The slumbrous golden echoes of the foam
Amid the wandering Cyclades. Serene
And lofty cadence of the spherul hymn,
How passing sweet ! And I, whose earthly ways
Had moved among my fellow sheep, now trod
The billowy meadows of a newer star.
As one at morn awakening from sleep
And frenzied nightmare, to behold the day
Aglow with shining promise, such was I ;
While through the singing air around me stole
Fair presences, like visions of a night
That haunt the moonbeam hours, when one by one

HOPE

The cares of day are vanished. Tenderly
I trod amid the blossoms of the field,
Azure and gold and carnadine and snow,
To where a glowing river rolled its flood
Translucent over gems and scattered pearl.
There, through the warm delicious vale, behold,
How beamed the magic pinnacles and towers
As of a faery city in the land.

And straightway in mine ear began a song :
“ O pilgrim wanderer of another clime
Less radiant than ours, but called to see
Through shadows Life's propitious symboling,
And trace its jewel in mysterious veins
Confined of dimming cloud and dark alloy,
Ere yet the gleam mount purely to its sun :
Turn, turn thine eyes quick glancing o'er the land :
The flower-distilling branches of the field
Wave softly every one, their ripened blooms
Down flowing varied on the glistening air ;
And such a wind sighs tremulously low,
Like sound of waters caught from far-off sands.
Draw nearer to the river's brink.” Whereat,
My faltering gaze uplifting, I beheld
A lady, than the lilies round her feet
Thrice fairer, moving t'ward me through the dew.
Green was her raiment, of such tender light

HOPE

As laughs rejoicing the dark woods among,
When Spring returns, the lovely and the loved ;
And on her brow a garland crimson-hued,
And in her hand a blossom as of flame.

I greeted her : " O Lady of delight,
Who singing roamest maidenly along,
The queenly planet of this starry field ;
Unfold, I pray, unto my hungry soul
What nature framed this subtle grace of thine,
And what the name of this resplendent sphere
Hung in empurpled glory." Low she bowed,
As stately lilies, overcharged with rain,
Bend earthward their unsuccoured heads, when storm
Diffusive pours from early summer skies ;
Or as ripe corn before a slanting wind
Leans murmuringly ; so she with tinkling joy
Laughed singing : " In this land is known no shade,
Save that accounted radiance below
Upon the dusky planet whence you came.
Here, wheeling to a more auspicious sun,
That reflux sheds not intermittent beams
Obscure or fulgent in alternate round,
But one eterne enduring beauteous day,
We feel no other darkness of the soul,
We taste no other sorrow, than the pain
Far shadowed from the wayward paths of men.

HOPE

Insatiate still with whatso beauty brings,
Here stedfastly we dwell, from memory
Such treasure culling of departed hours
As glows enhancing now. My walks below,
Through humble habitations of the poor,
Were sweet with Hope, than whom high Charity
Scarce speaks in lovelier accents : for to men,
Encompassed by the fitful moaning Sea,
Whence souls unharboured come, and whither soon,
Life's toilsome journey over, they return,
The balm of constant Hope sheds healing joy,
Celestial alway and serene and pure.

“ This subtle woof of Nature that we wear,
Of moulded ether, light, or glittering dew,
Thrice purged in orbs of elemental fire,
We seek not to define : the gentle hand
That shaped the roses formed us, and we know
That Hand is good. More than such knowledge we
Not here aspire to, measuring delight
By things of beauty round about us thrown.

“ My name Speranza signifies my joy :
And this broad land is called the Land of Hope.”

She ceased ; but left the air with melody
So ringing clear that silence seemed a song ;
And I, its numbers drinking, stood awhile

HOPE

And held my peace : then soon began : “ O Hope,
Divine and mighty, anchor firm, whereon
The bark of human destiny secure
O'er-rides the stormiest gale ; how sweet to me
Thy singing, me, whose eyes whilom were dim
With hopeless cloud. Yet further still unfold,
If such thy gentle wishes not deny,
What city in yon emerald valley stands,
And tell the meaning of the flood that pours
Its wide translucent wave beneath our feet.”

I prayed her thus ; and she to me returned :
“ The mistless waters of this region spring
From hills of purest snow : seven wayward brooks,
Mysterious birth thence taking, bound along
To fill this bed and in one stately stream
Flow clear : from hence united doth it roll
Superb throughout the land, and, lingering on,
Glass in its wave the palaces and towers
Of yon high City of Faith that far away
Beams brightly ; fairer still it then descends,
Thrice fairer, through the shining Courts of Love,
And down the laughing plain of flowers, until
Its joyous flood is bosomed in the Sea.
But now behoves our journey should begin—
A pleasant way—so come.” And, turning, she
Bent low toward the stream, as one intent

HOPE

On sober thought. Me she reminded then
Of sweet Egeria, fabled nymph of old,
Who, wandering by tranquil waters cool,
Taught godly wisdom to that Roman king
Great Numa, when the Roman days were young ;
And of Narcissus pensive like a flower.

“ O stream of quenchless joy,” she recommenced,
“ Soft treasure, that dost gird our country round
With luminous delight ; in whose pure deep
Reflected fair the blossoms view their form,
And birds their ample plumage see, and palms
Down leaning mirror their luxuriant brows ;
On thy full wave descending bear us now
Gently along thy course.” She took my hand
And led me,—I, who stood amazed and dull—
I, speechless and much wondering—I, whose power
Faltered beneath her gaze,—to where a boat
Of slender frame lay restless among grass
And rushes that grew trailing from the bank.
She bade me enter with her, and anon
Unloosed the silken chain, and in the stream
Threw far her golden blossom, singing low.
Like to a swan slow gliding on the smooth
Unruffled wave, our bark swung round, and bent
Her undulating prow, and to and fro
Swayed softly, while the surge about her ran ;

HOPE

Then, from the margin to the central flood
Borne surely, with majestic motion free,
No veering helm to guide, nor any oar,
But only the sweet waters at their will,
We swiftly sped along the foamless race.
Less speedily among her frozen hills
Darts the blue torrent Rhone upon a bed
Precipitous, severe, in Leman's lake
To sink at last : but rippleless this stream ;
Nor touched with other sound than murmured fell
A distant echo on the languished ear.

I gazed on her before me ; and her eyes,
On my eyes fixed, were sunny bright : she spoke not
Till mine perforce would droop ; then said, as one
Forgetful of her former word, thus clear :
“ Tell, stranger, in this summer land, why thou
Dost roam alone, whom seeking ; for thine eyes
Bewildered gaze, not knowing where to rest.
Tell me thy heart's desire.” And I began
All tremblingly : “ O Lady, lost to truth
And winsome beauty did I seem erewhile,
In yon old earth afar : now wonder reigns
Upon my soul, not of dismay or fear,
Nor strangeness of this land ; but rich and new
The wonder, as if once familiar scenes,
Flashed through a spirit memory, were rolled

HOPE

Transfigured still o'er some elusive dream.
This garden world and what within it glows,
The placid streaming wave we sail upon,
The lingering glory of this purple sky,
And all the moving radiance of the wind
About us, and the harmony of joy
And passionless content,—such things as these
My weary heart's desire had visioned forth,
In stranger hue than ever pencil lit,
When plunged by dreaming painter in a sea
Of sunrise poured through trailing cloud and mist ;
Yet lost withal I know not how or where ;
My soul is led away." I ended thus,
The words unuttered failing into tears
That quenched my bosomed thought. But clear I
saw,
Through all the aimless discontent, and through
Earth's changeful musing, earthly doubt and fear,
Her restless swell of strange imaginings,
The string of gold that links her pearls in one :
Life, swung in purpose down the elements,
From bodeful sorrow swept to pure delight
Through agony and death and shining dream,
For ever swayed by visionary Hope,
Who speaks the promise, half-unveils the years,
And flings a moon-glow over memory,
And lights the setting star.

HOPE

The Lady smiled

To see me lost in silence and in tears—
First tears that broke the sorrow of my heart
For many a day. Then from the skiff she bent,
And dipped her lily fingers in the wave,
And, smiling still, with eyes of pure serene,
Rose tenderly and touched me on the brow.

Exult, ye marching planets, in your song
Magnificent of spiritual delight,
Ye lucent jewels of the crown of heaven :
For from the lofty circle of your train,
Insatiate still with sempiternal joy,
Ye gaze upon the mysteries of God.
Ye not as meddling sycophants would feign
In modern days, mere mass conglomerate,
By chance or vague attraction from the void
Abysmal darkness gathered on such scheme
As error frame or accident supply ;
But glowing blossoms in the walks of God,
Serene high messengers, archangels pure,
Of essence fine, inviolate, I deem
Ye rolling in the voiceful dome of heaven :
Gathered perchance an hoary sea of dew,
Or atoms flying to magnetic pole,
Allured by spirit harmony to form
The Architect's inscrutable design ;

HOPE

And brooded over by celestial care,
Instinct with sweet beatitude, and filled
With virtue to console both gods and men.

Such burst of song outspread in me its wings,
More rich than words can tell. The little tears,
And her light hand that touched me, cleansed away
What mortal doubt still lingered in my ken.
I saw, as down the flowing wave we sped,
From either bank, wide-stretching through the land,
The fragrant herb, the flowery trees, among
Whose sweetness walked the spirits of the blessed.
Amid the crimson dusk of flowers they strayed,
Each crowned with laughing flowers, large eyes aglow
In splendid beauty ; or reclined at ease
On purple-blossomed knoll, with harp and lute
Symphonious sounds awakening, dulcet lays,
Accompaniment to breaths of holiest song ;
And from the gleam of stilly lake, where rose
Bright isles of green, be-flowered, came motion through
The living air of wild delicious dance.
Some over glassy pool leaned down ; and some
Walked slow, contemplative, or with high souls
So bosomed in a sweet society
That meditation of a kindred hue
Smiled on each brow ; some gathered flowers ; and all
In purest pleasance mingled joyously.

HOPE

“ O Land of Hope,” the Lady sang, “ O Land
Wherein all mortal weariness is past,
And pain is done, and want is known no more ;
Soft haven that awaits the storm-tossed soul,
Who, bound through reaches of Infinitude,
Seeks rest upon his way : our hearts are glad
In praising thee, our voices in thy song
Freely resound exultant, and we wear
Thy glory for a raiment as we go.
O Land of Hope, O Land, where Hope is spun
From dreams heard in the waking of a world,
Ere Faith was born, or ere Philosophy
Spake unto men the outer thoughts of God ;
When visions through the mystery of night
Loosed utterance in the wild enchanted tongue
Of bard sublime or prophet. Land of Hope,
Sweet Land and true, when realtà abides,
Through which the soul moves nearing his desire.

“ Lo, stranger, from this garden of the Lord
Life onward sings, triumphant, through the way,
The way wherein her feet must tread, how far
Beyond the view of utmost fantasy
Not springing Hope can tell. But turn thy gaze
From visions past. Behold ! our vessel nears
The City of Faith. Her crystal battlements
Beam o’er the prow.”

HOPE

As one at eve returns
With slow step homeward, weary after toil,
And seeking rest : sweet in his bosom swell
Anticipant delights,—his loved one, she
Awaits him, and his little cherubs all,
That ope the door and lisp his name,—the thought
Of cheerful blazing hearth, evening repast,
And interchange of looks and converse kind—
Pure pleasures of the soul : communing thus
Within himself, he walks with head bent low,
Forgetful of all cares of earth. So I—
As in a dream I heard, scarce hearing ; saw,
But saw as in a dream.

Where grasses broke
On orient silver sand that lipped the wave
Clear flowing, as a living thing our bark
Approached the brink and stayed, her slender frame
All quivering as in sudden joy or dread.
Then came the chime of many voices sweet
Across that land ; and turning to the sound,
I saw a great throng wending that with toil
Seemed spent and wearied, but within whose eyes
Great splendour beamed. In raiment torn and old
Their rugged limbs were clad ; and one before
Their stern ranks marching came, in whom the fire
Of youth still burned and sunny vigour glowed.
Thought flew askance to memory of him,

HOPE

The apostate Julian named, who led his arms
Invincible through the devoted land
Where Persian Tigris rolled beneath the walls
Of Ctesiphon, her palaces and towers,
The seat of luxury and pride of kings ;
But these in peaceful mien led their array ;
And, 'stead of arms, the olive branch they bore,
And flute and reed to tune unwarlike song.
Toward the white walls of the City of Faith
They chanting went, nor turned to gaze aside
On any lingering glory of that land,
But fixed their bright eyes on the city fair.
And at the Lady's word I rose ; and we,
With footsteps in their melody attuned,
Commingled with their train amid the flowers.

Five-hundred paces haply of that field,
Soon measured, traversed slow, were past, when
all

The glad array paused silent at the door
Of Faith's high city. Lofty and wide-rolled
Its portals were, of alabaster clear,
Bedecked with gems ; an arch surpassing far
What antique skill had framed in flattery due
To conquering Caesar, when he led the spoils
Of victory through all adoring Rome ;
This too an arch of triumph built for kings.

HOPE

“ O enter in ” —was heard melodious strain
Of welcome—“ enter to this City fair,
Ye weary ones, the faithful of the earth.
Here on the ground our lilies white we strow
Before you : enter in and be at peace.
Here in sweet life, pure virginal, serene
Our warriors dwell, their stalwart battles past.
Here storm is done ; here eyes in vision bold
Transpierce the dazzling veil and look on God.
O enter in : the meed ye won is here.”

To my Son.

Born June 20th, 1904.

" . . . A Babe in lineament and limb
Perfect, and Prophet of the perfect Man ;
Whose face and form are Hers and mine in one,
Indissolubly married like our Love."

TENNYSON.

HAIL, Little One, the new-born Gift of Heaven !
Shapen in limb and feature perfectly,
And swathed in dreams of splendour thou art come,
The promised sweet fulfilment of our Love,
Human, divine, thy Mother's, mine, and God's.

Hail ! Hail ! thou from the starry path afar
Descended, with such wonder in thine eyes ;
From the immeasurable Deep come down
To trace our earthly limits ; to this sea,
From yonder billowy blossoming Sea of Light,
Whence God's articulate voice in music rings
Triumphant to the chaunting of the Blest ;
Unto this murmurous bodeful flood of sighs.
Ah, widowed at thy birth of so much joy

TO MY SON

Not knowing ! seëst not in the Eastern sky
The confines dark, but gazest at the West,
Where lingers yet the glory of thy dream !

We know thee not ; yet round about our hearts
Thy soul hath twined her tendrils ; through the doubt
Of antenatal gloom we worshipped thee,
And felt thy spirit spread her ample wings
Within us, to the music of our Love.
Then thou didst come, sweet Beauty of the Earth,
Fair to us as some newly risen star,
A silver-haired enchanter, that with Dawn
Glimmers along the threshold of the world.
O seeming like—most like a silver star,—
Be as a star in beauty, that thy soul
May shed her tender rays on all who live.

Ah me ! afar, afar, the gemmy strand
Recedes, Infinitude recedes, and Time
Engulfs thee in his overwhelming sea.
Murmurs of many voices reach thine ear
And dull the seraph-singing, and thine eye
Is darkened to the visions it hath known ;
Yet shall thy soul inevitably see
Whose smile awakes the blossoming of the fields,
And trace His splendour in the sun and stars ;
And thou shalt seize thy Life and mould it well,

TO MY SON

And forge the links of Destiny with power
Of Loveliness and Peace, to offer up
A Soul of peerless purity at last.

Thy tender cry breaks on us : thou art bound
Within our hearts, thy Mother's Love and mine.
Partaker of her sweetness and her grace,
Pure be thy spirit, Sweet, as she is pure,
As gentle and as holy in thy ways,
As wonderful, as winning, in thy Love.
So shall thy steps be blessèd as they bless,
And Joy gleam through Life's portals, and the night
Be radiant with angel-light and song,
Till She and Thou and I be gathered Home.

The Purgatory of Dante.

CANTO XXVIII.

A new translation in the original "terza rima."

"Like those Hesperian gardens famed of old,
Fortunate fields and groves."

DANTE leading, and Virgil and the poet Statius now following, they enter the Terrestrial Paradise as the sun rises. A sweet breeze laden with the fragrances of Paradise laughs against Dante's brow ; the birds carol joyously, and the leaves of the forest join them in chorus. His way is barred by a stream ; and he sees beyond the further bank a lady, culling flowers, and singing as she goes ; whom he calls and questions, and who answers him in words of wonderful knowledge pertaining to this Paradise.

AT once desirous to search through and round

The dense celestial wood, a-bloom alway,
Which to mine eyes the morning sun attoned,

I left the border without more delay,

Over the fragrance-breathing soil, slow, slow,
Along the champaign taking now my way.

THE PURGATORY OF DANTE

A gentle air smote me upon the brow

With sweetness and with power unchangeable,
In strength but as the softest winds that blow ;

To which the leafy boughs with tremulous swell

Inclined their burdened heads toward that part
Where shadow of the holy mount first fell ;

Yet from their upright mien they did not start,

Low-bending, that the wingèd vocal throng
Need cease the practice of their lovely art :

These in full joyance welcomed morn with song ;

The branches murmured chorus to their glee,
As lightly here and there they fled along :

Such chorus as is rolled from tree to tree

Through the pine forest on Chiassi's shore
When Eolus doth loose Sirocco free.

Already my slow feet had travelled o'er

A distance in that ancient wood so far
That whence I entered might be seen no more ;

And lo ! a stream my further way did bar,

Which to the leftward rolled its little tide
Above the slanting grass. All floods that are

On earth, or fount or purest waves that glide,

Some cloud within themselves would seem to own
Compared with this stream which could nothing hide :

CANTO XXVIII

But on and on it flowed with current brown,
Under perpetual shade that never here
Ray of the sun let in nor of the moon.

My feet were halted, but mine eyes did peer
Beyond the streamlet, and saw, marvelling,
The multitude of blossoms far and near ;

When I beheld—as oft a wondrous thing
So unawares to the rapt gaze is shown
That every thought beside takes instant wing—

A lady, singing as she went, alone,
While of the flowers painted in her way
She gathered rarest blooms one after one.

“ Ah ! beauteous dame,” I cried, “ who in the ray
Of penetrating Love dost move and glow—
If outward seemings still the heart portray

“ As they were wont—I do beseech thee now
Draw near the streamlet, that, as thou dost sing,
My eager soul thy song’s intent may know.

“ Thy looks to my imagination bring
What Proserpina was, where roaming, when
Her mother lost her and she lost the spring.”

As doth a lady turn and turn again,
Step after step slow following in dance,
Her feet scarce lifted from the soil ; so then,

THE PURGATORY OF DANTE

Turning to me this lady did advance

Upon the flowers of ruddy hue and flame,
With virginal mien and downcast countenance ;

Responding to my prayer as near she came,
So that I heard not melody alone,
But, sated, drank the meaning of the same.

There soon arriving where the stream rolled on
Its shining waves above the drenchèd grass,
She lifted up her eyes to me anon.

I think such vivid splendour did not pass
From Cytherea's lids, what time her child
Transpierced her other than his custom was.

Upon the further bank she stood and smiled,
Still culling blooms of hues diversified,
Here seedless sprung in this land undefiled.

Three paces only did the banks divide ;
Yet Hellespont, which Xerxes twice crossed o'er—
A curb for ever on all human pride—

Roused not impatience in Leander more
For Sestos and Abydos storm disjoined,
Than this in me, denied the further shore.

“ New comers,” she began, “ perchance ye find
Some cause of marvelling, in this land elect
To be the home of infant humankind,

CANTO XXVIII

“Seeing me wear such smiling blithe aspect ;
Yet will the Psalm ‘Thou, Lord, hast made me
blest,’¹

Bring radiance to uncloud your intellect.

“And thou who calledst me, before the rest
Advancing, say if aught else thou wouldst know :
I come intent to answer thy request.”

Then I : “The water, and the winds that blow
Sounding along the forest, stir in me
Belief opposing what I learned below.”²

“I will unfold the cause,” responded she,
“Wherefrom are sprung those seeming mysteries,
And purge away the glooms which compass thee.

“The Highest Good, himself alone do please,
Did make man good, for goodness, and this soil
Gave him in token of eternal peace.

“Through his default he tarried here brief while ;
Through his default, from freedom and pure mirth
He turned to bitter tears and endless toil.

“In order that the tempests, having birth
In exhalations, which from sea and shore
Pursue the heat that ever mounts from earth,

¹ The *Delectasti me*, Psalm xcii. 4. The translation here given is not literal.

² See *Purgatory*, Canto xxi., lines 43-55.

THE PURGATORY OF DANTE

“ Should, raging, harm not man, this hill doth soar
Against the heaven so high that it stands clear
Of every change above the close-barred door.¹

“ Now therefore, since the all-encircling air
Within the primal round doth whirl immense,
Unless the course be shattered anywhere,

“ Its motion smites this lofty eminence
In living air transfixed, and wakens sound
Harmonious throughout the forest dense.

“ And in the plants here smitten doth abound
Rare virtue of a power that issues forth
And in the circling ether is borne round ;

“ Till, hence, through other regions of the earth,
By merit of their soil and climate, shoot,
New-gendered, various trees of various worth.

“ Nor cause would seem for wondering dispute
Were but the truth thou hearest learned below,
When from a source unknown some plant takes root.

“ And of this holy country thou must know
It teemeth with all seed, and fruit doth yield
Beyond what mortal garnering can show.

“ Not from a source forth welling, which, congealed,
The vapours feed, doth spring this water pure,
Like other streams that empty and are filled ;

¹ The Gate of Purgatory.

CANTO XXVIII

“ But issues from a fount, unchanging, sure,
Which e'er so much regaineth by God's will
As it along a twofold bed can pour.

“ This stream from man's soul every deed of ill
Hath virtue to remove, the other one
His memory with holy deeds can fill.

“ This stream is by the name of Lethe known,
The other stream Ennöe ; and until
They both are quaffed their purpose is not won.

“ All other savours this doth far excel ;
And albeit thy thirst is sated now,
And needs that I no more to thee reveal,

“ As grace this cōrollary I bestow :
My words, I deem, were not less dear a thing,
E'en if beyond the first intent they go.

“ Those poets who in ancient times did sing
The age of gold and its pure happiness,
Saw this land, in Parnassus slumbering.

“ Here innocent was born the human race ;
Perpetual spring and every fruit are here ;
The nectar whereof each one tells is this.”

Then to my poets, following a-near,
I backward turned, and saw with what rare smiles
The last interpretation they did hear.

But to the lady I returned erewhiles.

THE PURGATORY OF DANTE

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION OF DANTE.

IN presenting to his few readers this specimen of a translation from Dante done in the original "terza rima," the present writer feels it incumbent upon him to offer a few words to explain, and perhaps to apologise for, his action. The Anglo-Saxon-speaking race, though in proportion to its size and magnificence a producer of but few poets of rare and solitary grandeur—in these modern days how few!—is yet an omnivorous reader; and there are not many classic writers of whatever nationality whose works have missed the destiny of being boiled and reboiled in the translator's magic crucible, issuing therefrom dishes delectable or of uncertain sweetness, in attempt to satisfy its insatiable hunger. Dante has met with very favourable treatment on the whole at the hands of his numerous translators, despite the grotesqueness of a Boyd; and the splendid work of men such as Cary, Longfellow, and Plumptre is worthy of the highest praise. Yet it can not be denied how far these two first are away from their original. Dante's language is always direct; the style of Cary's translation is involved and *Miltonic*. Cary preserves Dante's stateliness without his simplicity, and overbalances it with high sound. Longfellow, who was a natural poet, endowed with fine abilities which he never fully used, translated Dante with indolence. The great Tuscan's work is nervous, sinewy, close-knit in every part; the gigantic labour of a man of untiring sleepless energy. The slipshod ease of Longfellow therefore is not fitted to the task. These two are our finest blank verse translations completed so far; and they are achievements of power and beauty. And since now we are inclined to look upon heroic blank verse as the most natural poetic measure of the English tongue, in this form we should expect to find the best original and the best reproduced specimens of poetry: but perhaps the genius of Rossetti, as embodied in his beautiful translation of Dante's "Vita Nuova," has given us not only the desire, but has

CANTO XXVIII

shown us the possibility of an adequate and noble rendering of the "Divina Commedia" in rhyme. Be this as it may. Despite the hand of the artisan shown now and again in his work, and despite his frequent want of music, Dean Plumptre's version is the one sure to advance in public favour till some better supersedes it. It is scholarly; it is correct; it is often noble; and it has retained much of the spirit of Dante. Only one thing is lacking, and the lack is fatal: this many-gifted translator was not a poet born, and the spirit of Poesy will not be controlled. He has done well—nay, excellently; but better may still be done.

The present writer advances no claim in respect to his own small attempt, and asks no consideration; but he feels the truth of the preceding remarks, and does not forbear to utter them. Moreover, even were the translation of these few lines adjudged a success, a deep humiliation still remains in the knowledge that they are but an hundredth part of the work done by Dean Plumptre and his fellows in their renderings. But this is not the point. If success were possible, it would consist in having roused some tone—far off, perchance, and faint—but a genuine tone of the mighty spirit of Dante, and of having infused it into these English words. The outward form is after all a subsidiary matter; yet though the Italian may be a more ductile language than our own, the English will lend itself sweetly to the "terza rima," nor does that style, melodiously framed, grow wearisome; and why should we not have Dante translated, if anyway possible, in the lingering rise and fall of these three-line stanzas which he chose for himself? These words, and the rendering here given, may be of not much illumination, but if the gentle reader turn hence to his Dante, the writer is blessed.





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